

creates the beautiful character, and which builds up the beautiful life. This something the Germans call Christian consciousness. We Methodists call it experience. The Friends call it the inner light. St. John and the Mystics call it perfect love. The Presbyterians call it the full assurance of faith.

Now, if I can succeed in conveying to your minds a clear conception of this, I shall have laid the foundation for the true apprehension of the entire subject of Christian perfection, inasmuch as the perfect character grows out of this, and the perfect life derives its power and vitality from this.

First of all, let me fix your attention upon this inward experience as it appears in the New Testament. Both expositors and theologians are now beginning to understand that we can comprehend the teaching of the New Testament only in the light of the history of the living, apostolic Church. They discover that the central force of that history was the experience of Pentecost—that the living, practical result of the work of Christ was to prepare the Church for, and to bestow upon the Church, the gift of this Spirit. St. Peter, immediately after the baptism of the Spirit had descended, declared this: "Being therefore by the right hand of God, exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this which ye see and hear." St. Matthew, in his record of the prophetic work of John, tells us the same thing: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." So St. John, in his record, written long after: "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth." These passages, which we might multiply from the pages of every writer of the New Testament, are sufficient to show that the inward experience, called here the gift of the Spirit, is the fundamental fact in Christianity. It first formed the Church itself. It was the bond of living unity and fellowship among its members. It gave rise to their outward ecclesiastical organization. It gave form to their doctrinal conceptions. It purified and perfected their ethical ideas, and thus perfected both the outer life and the inner character of all the saints. It was the badge, the seal, the witness of their sonship.